

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INSE-00 IO-13 CA-01 VO-05 CIAE-00
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R 210912Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2544
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL FUKUOKA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMCONSUL OSAKA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 1528

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: BOAT REFUGEES ENCOUNTERED ON THE HIGH SEAS

REF: HONG KONG 1996

1. IN DISCUSSION OF CURRENT SITUATION RE SEALAND VESSEL
WITH 55 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES ABOARD, UNHCR REP FOR EAST
SOUTH ASIA SAMPATKUMAR RELATED TO EMBOFF VIEWS ON TEMPORARY
ASYLUM FOR REFUGEES ENCOUNTERED ON HIGH SEAS.

2. REGIONAL REP IS OF OPINION THAT SHIPS' CAPTAINS'
INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERS DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THEY WILL
AID REFUGEES IN DISTRESS. HE SAID, IN HIS EXPERIENCE,
NEITHER OWNER'S POLICIES NOR POLICIES SET FORTH BY
GOVERNMENTS OF MERCHANT VESSELS COUNT FOR MUCH IN MOMENTS
OF DECISION.
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3. REGARDING MERCHANT VESSELS' GOVERNMENTS' ATTITUDES,
SAMPATKUMAR STATED THAT UNHCR REPRESENTATIONS TO MARI-
TIME NATIONS HAVE RESULTED IN A GENERAL POLICY HELD BY
GOVERNMENTS THAT THEIR SHIPS CAN AND SHOULD AIR REFUGEE
VESSELS EVEN TO THE POINT OF TAKING REFUGEES ABOARD
WHEN SITUATION WARRANTS. HE SAID THAT IN PAST MONTHS,

MERCHANT VESSELS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DISEMBARK REFUGEES AT NEXT PORT OF CALL WITHOUT UNDUE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED WITH RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS CONTROLLING PORTS. UNHCR REP CITED PERSISTENT REPRESENTATIONS BY UNHCR TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN REGION SINCE 1975 HAVE RESULTED IN IMPROVED ACCEPTANCE ATTITUDES.

4. MR. SAMPATKUMAR SAID THAT UNHCR WOULD NOT BE IN FAVOR OF A REFUGEE SPECIFICALLY FOR THOSE BOAT CASES PICKED UP ON HIGH SEAS. CITING MACAU AS EXAMPLE, HE SAID THAT WERE ONE SUCH PLACE RESERVED FOR RESCUED BOAT REFUGEES, IT COULD SOON BECOME A DUMPING GROUND, OVERCROWDED AND OBSCURE IN TERMS OF INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION. FURTHERMORE, IT WOULD, HE SAID, LET GOVERNMENTS IN THE REGION "OFF THE HOOK" IN GRANTING FIRST ASYLUM TO REFUGEES RESCUED AT SEA.
MILLER

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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